



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 29, 2011

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Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Gloria Molina Call for Outreach Strategy for In-Home Supportive Services Recipients program

The Board of Supervisors Tuesday braced for severe cuts to the County's In-Home Supportive Services program (IHSS), a program that provides at-home assistance for eligible seniors, people who are legally blind and people with disabilities. For many of the 184,000 County's recipients, receiving a few hours a month of care allows them to remain at home instead of moving into a nursing home or board and care facility.

If next month's state revenue forecast falls short of \$87 billion, the California Department of Social Services (DPSS) will be required to slash the hours of monthly service to IHSS recipients by 20 percent. Current revenues indicate that the planned cuts are likely to be implemented by January 1, 2012, and DPSS estimates that the majority of Los Angeles County residents who receive IHSS benefits, as well as the majority of their 140,039 providers, will lose an average of 16 hours of service and/or work.

"These potential budget reductions could have far reaching implications on the quality of life of more than 300,000 residents of the County of Los Angeles," said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas, before the Board vote. "IHSS impacts all five districts in a very important way."

Acting on a joint motion by Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Gloria Molina, the

board directed Chief Executive Officer Bill Fujioka to assemble a task force that will develop an outreach strategy to inform consumers of the change and to prepare to process the anticipated high numbers of consumers who will likely request and submit applications for exclusion.

Although this 20 percent reduction is not subject to appeal, consumers can request an evaluation to be excluded from the cut and maintain the same level of service. To do so, however, recipients must submit an application for exclusion to the Department of Public Social Services within 15 days of receiving a notice of action.

Rachel Scherer of Disability Rights California applauded the steps taken by the Board, warning that the service cuts could trigger a “humanitarian crisis.” People with Alzheimer’s disease who need prompting from workers to take their medication or to eat, she said, could be left to languish.

“People will die in their homes or will have to go to a nursing home or facility,” Scherer said.

The Board also approved a friendly amendment by Supervisors Michael Antonovich and Zev Yaroslavsky instructing the Department of Health Services to evaluate the impact of the 20 percent reduction on IHSS providers. The workers who care for the at-home care population are themselves vulnerable to losing health care coverage, should their hours of work fall below state requirements.

Kiya Stokes of the Service Employees International Union also spoke in favor of the supervisors’ motion, noting that care providers who do not meet the 77-hour monthly quota could themselves need county assistance obtaining health care.

The Board directed the CEO to determine how many workers would lose their health care benefits, what would be the impact to the County and whether those workers would be eligible for alternative coverage such as that provided by Healthy Way L.A.

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